

Message Text

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PAGE 01 THESSA 00235 091822Z

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, GR, TU

SUBJECT: ELECTION DISTURBANCES IN THRACE

REF: THESSALONIKI'S 231

1. ALL THESSALONIKI PAPERS APRIL 8 AND 9 CARRIED FRONT PAGE REPORTS OF MANIFESTATIONS AND DISTURBANCES OCCURRING IN KOMOTINI, WESTERN THRACE, AS RESULT OF ELECTION OF CONSERVATIVE CU CANDIDATE STOYANNIDES AS MAYOR, ALLEGEDLY WITH ALMOST TOTAL SUPPORT OF MINORITY MOSLEM COMMUNITY. "ELLINIKOS VORRAS" APRIL 8 REPORTED 2,731 CHRISTIANS AND 4,631 MOSLEMS VOTED FOR STOYANNIDES SLATE, WHILE 5,896 CHRISTIANS AND 399 MOSLEMS VOTED FOR COALITION OPPOSITION ORTAXIDES SLATE. IT CHARGED TURKISH CONSULATE IN KOMOTINI HAD INSTRUCTED MOSLEMS THERE HOW TO VOTE, AND DEMANDED THAT NEW MAYOR AND MUNICIPAL COUNCIL RESIGN.

2. PRESS REPORTS THAT TWO PROTEST RALLIES HELD IN CENTRAL SQUARE KOMOTINI APRIL 8, SHOPS WERE CLOSED, WORKERS REFUSED TO WORK, FLAGS FLOWN AT HALF STAFF,
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PAGE 02 THESSA 00235 091822Z

AND ALL ACTIVITY STOPPED. LATER IN SAME DAY IT WAS

ANNOUNCED THAT SIX MEMBERS OF STOYANNIDES SLATE HAD RESIGNED. GENDARMERIE INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR NORTHERN GREECE ARRIVED IN KOMOTINI YESTERDAY TO REVIEW SITUATION, WHILE STOYANNIDES WAS SENDING CABLES TO MINISTERS IN ATHENS AND THESSALONIKI TO "PROTEST PECULIAR ATTITUDE OF AUTHORITIES". HOWEVER REPORTS FROM KOMOTINI WERE THAT GOG CONSIDERED RESULTS LEGAL AND DID NOT INTEND TO INTERVENE. FURTHER NOTED THAT ALL 17 COUNCILLORS UNDER LEADING AND RUNNER-UP SLATES WERE CHRISTIANS, WHILE MOSLEMS ON STOYANNIDES SLATE RECEIVED VERY FEW VOTES SINCE "MOST" HAD ANNOUNCED WITHDRAWAL THEIR CANDIDACIES FEW DAYS EARLIER. (WE UNDERSTAND THAT TRADITIONALLY MOSLEM MINORITY REPRESENTED BY ROUGHLY ONE-THIRD MEMBERS ON MUNICIPAL COUNCIL.)

3. RESUMING EDITORIAL ATTACK APRIL 9, "VORRAS" EDITOR KYROU SAYS INDIGNATION NOT AGAINST MOSLEM MINORITY, BUT AGAINST THOSE GREEKS WHO MADE DEAL WITH SOLID MOSLEM GROUP UPON WHOM MAYOR WOULD BE DEPENDENT, WHICH WOULD BE "CONTRARY TO MEANING OF SELF-GOVERNMENT", AND AGAINST THOSE "FOREIGN CITIZENS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF A HOSTILE COUNTRY WHO ORGANIZED, MISLED AND DIRECTED THIS GROUP OF MOSLEM MINORITY". GREECE CANNOT TOLERATE SUCH INTERVENTION, WHICH UNDERMINES BROTHERLY RELATIONS OF CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM GREEKS AND "FOUNDATIONS OF OUR POLITICAL AND COMMUNAL INSTITUTIONS".

4. COMMENT: REGARDLESS OF POLITICAL MORALITY OF ALLEGED "DEAL", IT WOULD SEEM FROM NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS THAT PROTESTORS ON SHAKY GROUND IN QUESTIONING RIGHT OF MOSLEM MINORITY TO VOTE AS BLOC SHOULD THEY CHOOSE. HOWEVER ANGER OVER REPORTED INTERFERENCE OF TURKISH CONSUL IN GREEK ELECTION IS UNDERSTANDABLE. (RESENTMENT AND SUSPICION OF HIS ACTIVITIES AMONG MOSLEM COMMUNITY BY ETHNIC GREEKS IN AREA IS FACT OF LONG STANDING.) IT WOULD BE REMARKABLE IF THIS LATEST MINORITY ISSUE FLARE-UP IN TOUCHY THRACE WERE NOT PICKED UP AND EXPLOITED BY TURKISH PRESS, AT LEAST.

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PAGE 03 THESSA 00235 091822Z

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